

negotiated upon award of the grant, which will take place no later than September 30, 2003.

III. Statement Of Work

USDOL is seeking qualified organizations that will implement, in partnership with USDOL, a regional project in Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua) to improve compliance with national labor laws by strengthening enforcement systems and increasing knowledge of labor laws among employers and workers. Specific project objectives are identified in section III.C. Applicants should submit proposals that are regional in scope and demonstrate the organization's capabilities to implement a project in accordance with the Statement of Work and the selection criteria. Applicants, however, will not be penalized for lacking previous experience working on regional projects. For example, organizations with experience in only one country will be judged based on the success they achieve in that country and their proposal for working successfully throughout the rest of the targeted region. USDOL encourages applicants to be creative in proposing innovative and cost-effective interventions that will produce a demonstrable and sustainable impact.

Funds will be provided by grant to qualifying organizations. The grant will be actively managed by USDOL/ILAB to assure achievement of the stated project objectives. The award of any sub-contract will be subject to USDOL policies and approval (see section IV).

Note: Selection of an organization as a grantee does not constitute approval of the grant application as submitted. Before the actual grant is awarded, USDOL may enter into negotiations about such items as program components, funding levels, and administrative systems in place to support grant implementation. If the negotiations do not result in an acceptable submission, the Grant Officer reserves the right to terminate the negotiation and decline to fund the application. Award is also contingent upon signature of a letter of agreement between USDOL and relevant ministries in target countries.

A. Background and Problem Statement

The United States and five Central American countries (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua) are engaged in negotiations toward a comprehensive free trade agreement. In the area of labor, one of the objectives of the United States is to improve labor law compliance in the region by seeking an appropriate commitment from the Central American countries to effectively enforce their

laws and to educate employers and workers about their obligations and rights under such laws.

The Central American countries have requested further technical assistance from the U.S. to strengthen the capacity of their labor ministries to enforce labor laws. Among the specific areas identified by the countries for technical assistance are the promotion and dissemination of information on national labor laws and their application throughout the population, particularly among workers and employers; strengthening of labor inspection systems; and developing and strengthening alternative dispute resolution systems.

Among the areas of concern cited in these and other sources and areas in which USDOL hopes to provide assistance, are:

- The need to strengthen effective enforcement of labor laws.
- The need to strengthen promotion of the freedom of association and collective bargaining principles.
- The need to increase knowledge among employers and workers regarding national labor laws.
- The need for the Ministries of Labor to receive sufficient resources from their national budgets to foster improved labor relations.

Assessments of the current status of labor rights and their implementation in southern Africa are available in a variety of sources, among them the annual U.S. Department of State Report on Human Rights Practices; the recommendations of the Committee of Experts of the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Committee on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations; the recommendations of the ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association; and reports of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). USDOL/ILAB will post additional background information on its Web site at <http://www.dol.gov/ilab/>.

B. Target Population

Applicants shall target labor ministries, employer organizations and/or individual employers, worker organizations and/or individual adult workers and youth of legal working age.

C. Objectives

The Grantee(s) will implement, in partnership with USDOL, a project whose overarching objective is to improve labor law compliance in Central America through strengthened enforcement systems and increased knowledge of labor laws and their

application among employers and workers.

In order to ensure achievement of the project objective, the Grantee(s) will first, in conjunction with USDOL, evaluate countries' political will to address the key areas of concern outlined in the background section. Applicants should provide a plan for how they might approach the evaluation of these areas of concern issues and how this evaluation will shape project activities. In the Central American countries where the Grantee(s), in conjunction with USDOL, have decided according to the evaluation strategy that a country has demonstrated sufficient political will and progress to effectively address those concerns and sustain the impact of technical assistance beyond the life of the project, the Grantee(s) will provide assistance to achieve the following specific project objectives (i.e., "immediate objectives"):

Immediate Objective 1: Increased knowledge among workers and employers of national labor laws and of the available means to access labor ministry services to enforce the rights established by those laws, in particular:

- The right to freedom of association;
- The right to organize and bargain collectively;
- The prohibition of the use of any form of forced or compulsory labor;
- Labor protections for children and young people, including a minimum age for the employment of children and the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor; and
- Legally-mandated conditions of work with respect to minimum wages, hours of work, and occupational safety and health.

Achievement of this objective may be measured, in part, through an increased number of requests for Labor Ministry assistance as a direct result of the awareness campaign.

Immediate Objective 2: Strengthen labor ministry inspection systems to effectively enforce national labor laws. This may be measured, in part, through (a) The introduction of a civil service and administrative career path and the institutional procedures and mechanisms necessary for its successful sustainability, (b) increased number of labor inspections, (c) improved quality and timeliness of inspectors' reporting, (d) increased corrective actions taken as a result of inspections, and (e) increased performance, motivation, and job satisfaction of labor inspectors.

Immediate Objective 3: Create new or strengthen existing dispute resolution mechanisms within labor ministries (e.g., mediation, arbitration, alternative dispute resolution). This may be